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Excellence in Education: High School Reform

A discussion paper

A letter from Ontario's Minister of Education and Training

Ontario's secondary schools must change to meet the present and future needs of our students. As Minister of Education and Training, I am committed to building a high-quality education system based on a relevant and challenging curriculum.

In order to ensure that Ontario has the best high school system in the world, I want and need your advice on the issues outlined in this booklet.

As previously announced, the Ontario government will fulfil its commitment to implement the recommendations of two royal commissions on education and move towards a four-year secondary school program, effective September 1998. Ontario will then join the other provinces which have four-year secondary school programs.

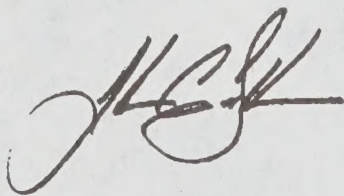
In addition to creating a four-year secondary school program, the government's reforms will also give us the opportunity to address issues critical to the future success of our students, including:

- higher standards of academic excellence;
- greater accountability to parents;
- comprehensive testing to measure academic performance;
- expanded co-op opportunities with employers;
- successful transition-to-the-workplace programs;
- enhanced technological learning in the classroom.

To ensure the right choices are made for future generations, we need the input of teachers, business leaders, educators, and, most important of all, parents and students.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to the future of our youth. I look forward to working with you to develop a high-quality education system that can set new standards around the world.

Yours truly,



John Snobelen
Minister of Education and Training



Introduction

Ask the teachers you know. They will tell you they are frustrated, being asked to run “school as usual” while the world around them changes. Ask them if they feel challenged and supported in their profession. Ask them what barriers are keeping them from teaching as well as they want to.

Ask parents if they think high schools are doing a good job of teaching their children and helping build their futures. Ask students what keeps them from learning and taking charge of their own futures. Ask them all if high school report cards really tell how much students are learning, or how well schools are performing. Ask parents whether they think their financial investment contributes to student achievement.

When parents have questions – do they know who to call? Are the answers they receive satisfactory? Does it seem that the people at the school really know their children?

Ask employers about the young people they hire. Do these young people have the knowledge and skills they need for success? Ask staff at colleges and universities. Are the graduates who arrive at their doors equipped with the skills they ought to have? Why is there such a need for first-year college remedial programs to help students improve skills in communications, mathematics, and technology – skills that are essential for success in their postsecondary careers?

The answers to these questions would show that most people in Ontario – teachers, students, parents, and employers – know that our high schools need improvement. No one is completely satisfied: we’re proud of the achievements of our high schools, but we know we must do better to live up to the standards of the teachers, students, and parents who are the true owners of high school education in Ontario. We already know many ways we can improve high schools to meet the legitimate expectations of

Ontario's young people and strengthen confidence in our education system. This discussion paper reflects advice from school boards, teachers' federations, colleges, universities, business, parents, and students. Now – we want your advice.

The world has been changing faster than our high schools have

Computer technology is transforming employment opportunities and requirements, and the way we share knowledge. Most high schools have not kept up. Most school boards have bought computer equipment, but many teachers have not had opportunities to learn how to use it effectively.

Student populations have become more diverse; high schools have struggled to ensure that every student has an opportunity to learn and to excel. School safety is an issue today. Teachers and students face the real and perceived risk of violence; high schools and government have taken some action to deal with it, but more needs to be done.

There is a pervasive sense that “the system” is not keeping up with change, and that it's time for fundamental reform – reform that will keep what is good about Ontario's high schools, and at the same time introduce innovations that respond to the challenges of our changing society.

It's time to improve quality in Ontario's high schools

We've had enough studies. Since 1987, we've had the Radwanski Report and reports from the Select Committee on Education, the Premier's Councils, and, in 1995, the Royal Commission on Learning – all recommending system-wide improvements. We have begun to make some significant changes – we've invested in technology, developed better co-operative education and work experience opportunities in our high schools through business-school partnerships, and established School Councils to strengthen family and community links to high schools. Yet,

despite these changes, it is still possible in Ontario today for students who are not outstanding scholars or athletes, or who are not in difficulty, to complete their high school years without forming a single close relationship with a teacher. There are also more young people who arrive at the next stage of their careers – university, college, or the search for a first job – without the skills and knowledge required for success. If we are to ensure career choices and varied opportunities for the next generation, we must reduce our dropout rate and provide excellence in our education system.

Help us improve high school in Ontario

This paper describes some changes we plan to make, and others that you can help us decide on. It's time to bring our high schools in line with the new developments that are shaping life and work in our province – and in the world. We can do that best if students, teachers, parents, employers, and educational administrators work together. Please read about the plans and proposals outlined here, and use the Response Form at the back of this booklet to give us your advice.

How did we get here?

In the 1960s students were streamed into three programs:

- a five-year university preparation program ending in “departmental” exams administered by the province;
- a four-year program for entry from Grade 12 to job-specific training, community college (after 1965), or work;
- a two-year program for direct employment after Grade 10.

Departmental exams were discontinued in 1967, and we adopted a credit system – students passed or failed individual courses rather than whole grades. Students were “streamed” into courses by level of difficulty, choosing from a variety of courses rather than having a set program in each grade.

These changes aimed for a balance between two roles for education. One is to provide young people with the skills, knowledge, and work habits they need to find or create gainful and satisfying employment and to be independent, productive, and contributing members of our society. The second is to provide an environment where students reach their personal potential, develop general life and coping skills, “learn to learn”, build self-esteem, develop interests and integrity, and “become good citizens”.

Many in Ontario argue that changes to Ontario high schools that began in the 1960s have focused excessively on the second role – being more concerned with “civilizing” the young than with giving them the tools they need to become productive and independent. But education can succeed only if the two roles are balanced. What’s more, the world has changed, but our high schools have not kept up: we have unemployed high school graduates and a shortage of technically skilled workers. Some high school graduates do not have high enough literacy and math skills to function effectively in the workplace. High schools must equip students with the practical skills they need to become independent in today’s world.

The Reforms

First – let's eliminate the extra year of high school.

Ontario is the only place in North America where most students take more than four years to complete high school. Students can earn the credits to graduate in four years, but more than 60 per cent take longer than four years (some take as long as six or seven years). The extra time is valuable time taken out of young people's lives. The Royal Commission on Learning said that no measurable benefits are gained from the fifth year of high school. Ontario students don't do demonstrably better than students from other provinces – either in international and national tests, or in college, university, and the workplace. Our universities accept graduates from other provinces – and these students perform as well as Ontario high school graduates.

An extra year out of our young people's lives, with no measurable benefit: that's reason enough for the first of our high school reforms. Ontario will move to a four-year high school program in 1998.

Second – let's establish clearer and higher standards.

It's not a matter of money. Ontario spends more than \$13 billion on education every year – significantly more per student than the average of the other provinces. We pay higher salaries – to teachers, custodians, academic administrators – but Ontario students don't outperform students in other provinces. Studies say that much of the money is spent in ways that contribute nothing to students' classroom achievement. We spend more, but we don't get more. And our system has not adjusted to change as well as we have a right to expect.

Ontario's high school teachers are as qualified and dedicated as other teachers; our students are as gifted and ready to learn as other students. So, to improve quality in our high schools, we should consider these questions:

- What are students being taught, and what standards do they achieve?
- How do students, parents, and teachers track and measure students' success in learning what they will need to equip them for later life?

All students should have a high-quality curriculum with demanding standards. This curriculum should be relevant to their future goals and should prepare them to become contributing members of society. Today's courses don't pass that test. The high school curriculum has not been overhauled in more than a decade – a decade in which many fields have seen great changes. There have been huge advances in the sciences. In mathematics, calculations that used to take a mathematician a lifetime can now be completed in seconds using computers. There has been tremendous growth in Canadian literature, and there have been profound changes in our understanding of Canadian and world history. The courses teachers are asked to teach do not always reflect these realities.

The relationship between teachers and students should be central to the high school experience, but opportunities for building teacher-student connections have dwindled. Teachers now feel like “case managers” – moving students through the system – rather than professional educators who ensure that each student is learning effectively.

Standards aren't consistent. Local circumstances may call for different approaches (to overcome geographical isolation, for example), but students and teachers in all parts of Ontario should perform to the same high standards.

We need more rigour and more relevance. Students preparing for university need to achieve higher standards within a more challenging curriculum. Students going to college or the workplace need courses that reflect the requirements they will encounter.

As the Royal Commission on Learning pointed out, students need career awareness so that they can make informed career decisions and pick courses of study to prepare them for adult life. Expanding work experience through partnerships between high schools, colleges, and universities and business and the community will help meet this need.

Ontarians agree that our high schools can work better if we:

- make standards more rigorous for all students;
- provide a focused program for those going to college or the workplace;
- improve measurement and reporting of student achievement;
- improve career education and provide strong connections between education and the workplace; and
- replace the five-year program with a four-year program.

The high school curriculum will be redesigned to provide courses that are both challenging and relevant to students' post-secondary goals – university, college, or work. University- and college-bound students will take courses that prepare them for their future academic studies; those going directly to employment will have experience in workplaces.

Career education will help students learn about opportunities and make informed decisions about the choices they will face upon leaving school. Work or community placements will help them apply the knowledge they acquire in school outside the classroom, without compromising their academic studies.

All students, with their parents, will prepare an annual education plan – setting goals and selecting courses to equip them to meet these goals. The plan will include learning or improvement goals and identify the work experience the student will receive in Grades 11 and 12.

A. The Course Series

There will be four series of high school courses, each with a clear purpose, and appropriate content and methods of instruction.

Series 1 courses will be the same for all students. They will include courses like physical education and business studies, which are not related to specific postsecondary goals but which benefit all students.

Series 2 courses will prepare students for most college programs, for apprenticeships, and for entry into the work force. Courses will emphasize concrete applications of skills and knowledge: a Series 2 English course might emphasize business and technical writing.

Series 3 courses will prepare students for university and some specific college courses. Courses will emphasize theory, with some concrete applications: a Series 3 English course might focus on English literature.

Series 4 courses – “transfer courses” – will let students move between Series 2 and Series 3 courses if their goals change. These courses will be shorter and will focus on the additional knowledge required for successful transition: a student who has taken a Series 2 English course in business writing could take a Series 4 course to gain the knowledge needed for a transfer to a Series 3 course. Transfer courses will be particularly useful for students re-entering high school.

The deciding factor in course selection will be *the goals that the students have set for themselves*, based on their career objectives and their annual education plan. In other words, students will choose courses that will help them reach their goals. Series 4 courses will provide flexibility, allowing high schools to accommodate changes in students' plans better than rigidly streamed systems can.

B. A Prior Learning Assessment Process

Students who can demonstrate that they can pass a course will be able to receive credit – through a prior learning assessment process – without taking the course, and will be able to progress to other studies. This provision will help high schools respond to students who excel in particular areas. It will also help students who are transferring from one course to another, adult students, and students re-entering high school. The requirements for prior learning assessment – like other requirements in the new curriculum – will be high.

C. The Teacher-Advisor System

Many teachers, students, and parents are concerned that high school is becoming increasingly impersonal, making good teacher-student relationships hard to achieve. Today, even the most gifted teachers find it difficult to develop a positive and supportive relationship with their many students.

In speaking of Grades 7 to 9, the Royal Commission on Learning called for “advisory or mentor arrangements [to] create a role for teachers, not as either instructor or evaluator, but as advisor and advocate”. There’s an equal need for such arrangements in high school.



Some schools, in fact, already have such arrangements in place. The Ecole Secondaire Cochrane High School operates a successful teacher-advisor program. Every teacher acts as advisor to a small group of students (smaller than classroom size), meeting frequently with each student and regularly with parents to discuss progress and plans, and provide advice and support.

We're expanding the teacher-advisor system province-wide. Every student will have a teacher-advisor. The advisor may be a home-room teacher or a teacher specializing in an area of study of particular interest to the student. The advisor will work with the student to develop an annual education plan, to monitor progress, identify problems, and plan remedial actions. Parents will also meet with the advisor to discuss questions or concerns. The advisor will be an advocate – helping students communicate with other teachers and work towards their goals.

This change will make it possible for teachers to recapture what first attracted them to their profession – the opportunity to make a significant, lasting difference to their students.

D. Student Transcripts (Records)

Student transcripts now show the highest mark that a student achieved in a course – but not how many attempts the student made to get the mark. Universities and colleges are concerned that, not having this information, they cannot judge student readiness for postsecondary programs. There are also concerns that limiting the transcript to the highest mark sends the wrong message to students – that poor results are not important because they don't have to “count”.

In future, transcripts will show all attempts and the results achieved, in addition to the final mark. (They will also show the student's achievement on the new provincial Grade 11 literacy test.) This reform will give students an incentive to excel the first time they take a course; it will encourage graduation in four years; and it will make transcripts more useful to universities

and colleges in gauging student readiness for future studies. The policy will be flexible, to accommodate exceptional students and those in special circumstances, such as students coping with illnesses or a death in the family.

E. Developing New Partnerships for Better Education

Our society is making increasing demands on teachers and high schools – demands they can't meet alone, especially when swollen government deficits and public debt limit the resources available to schools across Ontario. Through stronger partnerships between high schools and colleges, universities, business, parents, and the community, we can give students the tools they need to set and achieve realistic and satisfying personal, educational, and career goals.

The partnerships will be different in different places. Students in smaller centres, or in communities with limited employment options, will need involvement from partners outside their communities to help them pursue opportunities that exist elsewhere.

Constructive partnerships are already evolving. In Thunder Bay, a partnership between the Lakehead Board of Education and the Valhalla Inn – a large local hotel – helps senior students interested in careers in the hospitality industry. They receive hands-on, employment-related training at the hotel while they are completing their academic studies.

There are many examples of emerging relationships – with partners in aerospace and other high technology companies, financial institutions, manufacturing companies, hospitals, colleges, and universities. There's a wide range of opportunities for partnerships between high schools and other parts of the community to strengthen the schools' ability to help our students achieve their goals.



Four Areas for Consultation

Ontario will be proceeding with the reforms we have described here: moving to a four-year high school program; renewing the curriculum; establishing a prior learning assessment process; establishing a teacher-advisor system; clarifying student transcripts; and establishing new community-wide partnerships.

These changes will help Ontario high schools provide higher quality education.

There are four other areas that require further discussion.

- A. How should Grade 9 – the first year of high school – fit into the new program?**
- B. What proportion of courses should be compulsory, and which courses should they be?**
- C. How should co-operative education/work experience be integrated into the new high school program? How extensive should the work experience component be?**
- D. What role should provincial testing play in the high school system?**

In this paper, we describe options for your consideration.

Issue A. Grade 9

Until 1993, Grade 9 – like the other high school grades – was a streamed, credit-based program with compulsory and optional courses. There were three levels of difficulty – Basic, General, and Advanced. Students received credit for completing courses; failed compulsory courses were repeated. Credits for courses counted towards graduation.

There was concern that this streamed Grade 9 program was too big a change from Grades 7 and 8, and that this was adding to the dropout rate. There was also concern that students had to make binding choices before they were ready. In response to these concerns, the Grade 9 curriculum was integrated with Grades 7 and 8 in 1993. Courses were destreamed, and all students completed a single compulsory program. Supporters of the change believed this approach would help students make better decisions about their future studies and would reduce the dropout rate.

The debate continues. Those who support the streamed format (including many teachers) argue that teaching is more effective when students with similar levels of achievement are grouped together. Many also believe that students benefit from making choices about educational and career goals before Grade 9.

Because the debate has continued, and because we want to incorporate in Grade 9 our key focus on standards and student goals, we believe it's useful to consider some different options for Grade 9.

The Current Grade 9 Program

The Grade 9 program established in 1993 operates as follows:

Curriculum – Students take a compulsory, destreamed curriculum based on four program areas: Language; Mathematics, Science, and Technology; Arts; and Personal and Social Studies: Self and Society. The courses are linked to Grade 7 and 8 courses.

Promotion – Students pass or fail the whole grade.

Grouping – Students are not grouped according to ability or their future plans. All students take the same curriculum.

The Options

We're proposing two options. Both involve a compulsory curriculum of eight subjects: English, French as a Second Language (FSL), Mathematics, Science, Technology, Arts (music, visual arts, drama, dance), History and Geography, and Personal Development (physical education, business studies, family studies, guidance, career education, and religious education in Roman Catholic schools). French-language schools will offer an identical program except that French as a first language (français) and English for French-language students are required.

Option 1: Introduce subjects and grouping of students for instructional purposes.

Curriculum – Students would take a single, compulsory curriculum based on the eight subjects, with higher standards than in our current system.

Promotion – Students would continue to pass or fail the whole grade, but percentage grades would be given in all subjects. Passing Grade 9 would be a requirement for graduation from high school. Students who demonstrated that they could meet the requirements for a course through prior learning assessment could move ahead to take a Grade 10 course.

Grouping – Grouping would be flexible. School boards could decide, in consultation with parents, how best to group students for the most effective teaching and learning. Students who need more instruction in a core subject like mathematics might be grouped together; those with common interests (in the arts or technology, for example) or those who would benefit from extra challenges could also be grouped together.

Option 2: Introduce a streamed, credit-based Grade 9.

Curriculum – The course structure would parallel the format for Grades 10 to 12. Streams would be based on the students' post-high school goals – university, college, or the work force. Students would take a compulsory, streamed curriculum based on the eight subjects.

Promotion – Percentage grades would be assigned in each subject; students passing a subject would earn credit towards graduation. Students who demonstrated that they could meet the requirements for a course through prior learning assessment could move ahead to take a Grade 10 course.

Grouping – Courses offered in the various subjects would be designed to prepare students for their post-high school goals. For example, students planning to attend university would take a different mathematics course from that taken by students aiming to move directly into the work force.

Summary

Grade 9 is a transition year for students. It is useful to review the Grade 9 program to ensure that it makes the greatest possible contribution to a successful transition for every student.

Issue B. Compulsory Courses – Proportion and Emphasis

In both of the options suggested for Grade 9, all subjects would be compulsory, although in the streamed version, students would take different courses, based on different standards, depending on their longer-term goals. From Grade 10 to Grade 12 students will take a streamed program that will include both compulsory and optional courses.

The compulsory courses will make up the core requirements that every student must complete in order to graduate. Students will also be able to choose optional courses that reflect their interests and their long-term goals. Some students might choose

to take optional arts or drama courses out of personal interest; others might take extra mathematics or physics courses to prepare for university; still others might take technology courses to prepare for apprenticeship programs. There are two questions here:

1. What is the right balance between compulsory and optional courses?
2. What compulsory subjects should receive the most emphasis?

We need a balance between a compulsory curriculum that will equip all graduating students with the core skills and knowledge they need to meet their goals, and an optional curriculum that will let students individualize their programs to fit their interests and ambitions.

There's a further, practical consideration in Ontario. Our French-language and Roman Catholic schools have special mandates; more compulsory subjects would reduce the scope for these schools to offer English, religious education, or other options that have a high priority for them.

Under the current system, credits are allocated on the basis of 8 credits for Grade 9, plus a total of 22 credits (110 hours each) for Grades 10 to 12. For discussion purposes, we propose to allocate the equivalent of 10 credits for Grade 9, and 27 credits for Grades 10 to 12, based on 90 hours each.

We're presenting four approaches to the balance between compulsory and optional courses. Which approach seems best to you? The number of compulsory courses for each approach is:

- Approach A: 20 compulsory out of 37 credits
- Approach B: 21 compulsory out of 37 credits
- Approach C: 24 compulsory out of 37 credits
- Approach D: 25 compulsory out of 37 credits

We also need to decide which compulsory subjects should have the most emphasis in the curriculum. Should some compulsory subjects be given more time than others?

The chart on pages 18-19 shows a range of course combinations for Grades 10 to 12 within the various approaches. Other possibilities exist; for example, in Option 6, an additional history course could be added by reducing technology to 0.5 and civics to 0. Review the various options and approaches. Which one seems most appropriate to you? Are there areas you believe need greater emphasis in the compulsory core curriculum?

Issue C. Co-operative Education/ Work Experience

One of the goals of high school reform is to give students the information they need to make informed educational and career choices, and opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in their chosen career path. Teachers and schools acting alone can't supply the full range of information and opportunities required.

The new high school program will include better career education. Through partnerships with employers, colleges, universities, parent groups, and others, it will provide up-to-date information and access to learning opportunities in real workplaces. Career education and work experiences can improve students' understanding of employment requirements and of the links between the skills and knowledge they are acquiring in school and their future plans. They can also enhance students' personal growth and their understanding of rights and responsibilities.

Many schools and school boards have programs such as job exploration, job shadowing, workplace visits, and co-operative education, but the programs aren't available everywhere. Most

Diploma Requirements: Options for Composition of Compulsory Credits

| Subjects in Grades 10-12* | Current** | Approach A | Approach B | |
|---|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | Option 1† | Option 2 | Option 3 |
| English | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Mathematics | 1 | 1½ | 2 | 1½ |
| Science | 1 | 1½ | 2 | 1½ |
| Technology | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Social Studies: Grade 10 – History and Geography | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Senior Social Science (Grade 11 or 12) – History – Geography – Business Studies – Family Studies – Civics | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 |
| Personal Development: – Arts (Visual Arts, Drama/ Dance, Music) – Physical and Health Education – Co-operative Education/ Work Experience – Guidance and Career Education | | 1 (arts or phys. ed.) ½†† 0 | 1 (arts or phys. ed.) 0 0 | 1 (arts or phys. ed.) ½ ½ |
| Total Compulsory Credits (including 10 Grade 9 credits) | 16 | 20 | 21 | 21 |
| Total Optional Credits | 14 | 17 | 16 | 16 |
| Credits Required for Graduation (27 plus 10 Grade 9 credits) | 30 | 37 | 37 | 37 |

* All of Grade 9 would be compulsory. Option 1 for Grade 9 has no credits and Option 2 has 10 credits.

** The current requirements (OSIS) are based on 30 credits for Grades 9-12. Each credit is 110 hours. The current definition of Senior Social Science includes: business studies, family studies, guidance, history, geography, personal life management, and physical and health education. The figures assume that the current Grade 9 program includes the following compulsory credits: English, French as a second language, mathematics, science, history and/or geography, business studies or technology,

| Approach C | | | Approach D | | |
|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| Option 4 | Option 5 | Option 6 | Option 7 | Option 8 | Option 9 |
| 4 | 3½ | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 3 | 2½ | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 2½ | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| 1½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | 1 | ½ |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 1 | 2 | 2 |
| | ½ | ½ | | | |
| 0 | 1 (arts or phys. ed.) | 1 (arts or phys. ed.) | 1 (arts or phys. ed.) | 1 | 2 |
| 0 | | | | 1 | 1 |
| 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 |
| ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ |
| 24 | 24 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| 13 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| 37 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 37 |

physical and health education, and arts. Note, however, that current policy permits variation among school boards/sections and schools about which compulsory credits are required in which grades.

† For discussion purposes, Options 1 to 9 are based on 37 credits for Grades 9-12. Each credit is 90 hours. Options for Grade 9 are discussed in Issue A.

†† See Issue C.

co-operative education programs in Ontario – including co-operative education through the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program – require students to commit from 220 to 550 hours (for 2 to 5 credits) in a year. This major commitment may be appropriate for many students, but difficult for those in the more academically oriented programs. Work experience must not interfere with students' academic work; we need more flexible co-operative education/work experience options, so students can participate for a shorter time. We also need a wider variety of placements, so that students' co-operative education/work experience and their academic program can be complementary. We outline three options for integrating co-operative education/work experience into high school studies. Whether arranged through the school or by the students (students will be encouraged to arrange their own placements to reflect their preferences and interests), all placements will be governed by the following requirements:

- There must be an approved learning plan for the work experience, based on provincial curriculum guidelines and including clear learning goals and an approved procedure for the placement.
- All students entering a work experience will first be instructed in relevant workplace issues to ensure their safety on the job and to enhance their understanding of the work environment.
- Schools will monitor students' progress towards their learning goals.
- Students will prepare a report on the work experience and their learning goals.

- The school will evaluate students' learning experiences – in consultation with the student and the employer – to ensure that learning goals are achieved. This evaluation will form the basis for awarding a credit or recognizing completion of work experience graduation requirements.

Current co-operative education programs will continue and will be expanded as we strengthen partnerships between schools and the community. We will also add a range of flexible options to make work experience realistically available to all students.

There are some questions to consider:

1. Should work experience be a requirement for all students?
2. Should short-term work experience placements be credit courses?
3. If students intend to pursue university programs after completing high school, should the definition of work experience include experiences that focus directly on the next steps in their career plans?

The Options

Option 1: Optional short-term co-operative education/ work experiences for credit

Under this option, students would choose to pursue a work experience based on their long-term goals, interests, abilities, and available time. Those who complete such experiences successfully would receive a full or partial credit. Individual schools and school boards – in co-operation with School Councils, students, families, and other community partners – would arrange suitable short-term placements.

Option 2: Compulsory short-term co-operative education/work experiences for credit

Under this option, all students would be required to complete a planned work experience involving community or work placements, or an in-school work assignment or simulation. For students in smaller or remote centres, this requirement could involve “distance learning” work simulations. Students would receive credit for successful completion. School boards and schools – with support from School Councils, students, families, and other community partners – would be responsible for arranging suitable short-term placements.

Students would earn either a full or half credit, depending on whether the requirement is defined as a 90- or a 45-hour requirement.

Option 3: Compulsory short-term co-operative education/work experiences (no credits) as a requirement for graduation

Under this option, every student would be required to complete a work experience – arranged through the school, local business or community partners, students, or their families. No credit would be granted, but students would complete either a 90- or a 45-hour work experience requirement in order to graduate.

Summary

Building co-operative education/work experience into the program for as many Ontario students as possible will contribute directly to our students’ ability to set and achieve realistic and satisfying goals for their futures. We ask you to review the options presented here, and provide us with your insights and advice.

Issue D. The Role of Provincial Testing

Students in Grade 3, Grade 6, Grade 9, and Grade 11 will be tested regularly by Ontario's new Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) – an independent body that will develop and operate Ontario's assessment program. In high school, the EQAO will test a sample of Grade 9 students in reading and writing or mathematics every second year. In Grade 11, every student will complete a general literacy test.

We'll work to improve provincial testing. Expanded testing and reporting to students and parents can improve our high schools, and help us identify and promote the most effective practices in all schools across the province. What are your views?

1. What purposes should provincial testing serve?
2. How should Ontario expand provincial testing? What subjects should be tested and in what grades? How should the results be reported?
3. Should Ontario re-introduce provincial examinations for all Grade 12 students? In which subjects?

Summary

All high school graduates should have the skills and knowledge they need to become independent and productive, and universities, colleges, and employers must be confident that the Ontario high school graduates they take on are equipped with appropriate skills. Testing and effective strategies for improvement can help us ensure that every student has an opportunity to achieve his or her educational, personal, and career goals.

Conclusion

Our high schools play two roles. One is to provide young people with the skills, knowledge, and work habits they will need to find or create gainful and satisfying employment and be independent, productive, and contributing members of society. The second role is to help students fulfil their personal potential, develop general life and coping skills, “learn to learn”, build self-esteem, develop interests and integrity, and “become good citizens”.

The reforms we have outlined will increase our schools’ ability to play both these roles successfully and will help to restore the balance between the two roles. This balance is essential for success in either role.

We want your advice as we build a new high school system that can respond to the pride, the ambition, and the potential of Ontario students, that can challenge and support our teachers, and that can create partnerships for learning between students, teachers, parents, businesses, and the community at large, to the benefit of all.

How to Respond

This response form has been designed to allow everyone interested in high school education to respond to the key elements of the proposed reforms.

In addition to your responses to the following questions, we encourage you to provide us with comments and suggestions on related issues discussed in the document. **Please use a separate sheet(s) of paper to elaborate on your responses and give comments and suggestions.**

Return responses by November 30, 1996, to:

Secondary School Consultation

Ministry of Education and Training

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Paper and Electronic Formats Available

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A. The Options for Grade 9

- **Option 1: Introduce subjects and grouping of students for instructional purposes.**
- **Option 2: Introduce a streamed, credit-based Grade 9.**

Refer to the description of the two options in "Issue A. Grade 9" (pages 14-15). Select and comment on your preferred option. (Please use a separate sheet of paper.)

☐ **Option 1**

☐ **Option 2**

B. The Options for Compulsory Courses – Proportion and Emphasis

Refer to the discussion of options in “Issue B. Compulsory Courses – Proportion and Emphasis” (pages 15-17) and the chart on pages 18-19. Select and comment on your preferred option.

If you have an additional option you would prefer to present, please do so.

- ☐ Option 1
- ☐ Option 2
- ☐ Option 3
- ☐ Option 4
- ☐ Option 5
- ☐ Option 6
- ☐ Option 7
- ☐ Option 8
- ☐ Option 9
- ☐ Other

C. The Options for Co-operative Education/ Work Experience

- Option 1: Optional short-term co-operative education/work experiences for credit
- Option 2: Compulsory short-term co-operative education/work experiences for credit
- Option 3: Compulsory short-term co-operative education/work experiences (no credits) as a requirement for graduation

Refer to the description of the options in “Issue C. Co-operative Education/Work Experience” (pages 21-22). Select and comment on your preferred option.

If you choose option 2 or 3, indicate a preference for either 45 hours or 90 hours.

☐ **Option 1**

☐ **Option 2**

☐ **Option 3**

☐ 45 hours

☐ 45 hours

☐ 90 hours

☐ 90 hours

D. The Role of Provincial Testing

Refer to the description of the provincial testing program in “Issue D. The Role of Provincial Testing” (page 23) and answer the following questions.

1. What purposes should provincial testing serve? (Select one or more of the following purposes. If you have additional purposes you would like to present, please do so.)

- ☐ To evaluate the effectiveness of education programs
- ☐ To identify problems and support remedial efforts
- ☐ To identify “best practices” and to help establish them in schools
- ☐ Other: _____

2. How should Ontario expand provincial testing? What subjects should be tested and in what grades? (If you indicate a specific subject, please indicate in which grade you believe the testing should occur.)

How should the results be reported?

3. Should Ontario re-introduce provincial examinations for all Grade 12 students?

☐ Yes ☐ No

In which subjects?

Respondent Information

Are you responding as:

- ☐ the representative of a group of
☐ an individual



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John Stanley

Name of
Respondent
or Contact

Address

Telephone

Fax

E-mail

If you are responding as a representative of a group (e.g., parents, teachers, students, etc.), please provide the following information:

Group/Organization/Company Name

The information below will help the ministry analyse responses to questions.

Please check the boxes that apply to you.

☐ **Parent of student in:**

- ☐ elementary school ☐ secondary school
☐ college ☐ university
☐ private vocational school

☐ **Student in:**

- ☐ elementary school ☐ secondary school
☐ college ☐ university
☐ private vocational school

☐ **Recent secondary school graduate (since 1990)**

☐ **Private sector respondent**

☐ **Public sector respondent (government employee)**

☐ **Member of education-related organization**

☐ **Teacher:**

- ☐ elementary ☐ secondary
☐ college ☐ university

Thank you for your participation

Thank you for completing this response form and sending us your comments and suggestions. The Ministry of Education and Training finds your input valuable in developing its policies.



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